



(Photo by Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Mahoney, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div.)

Say Cheese!

1st Lt. Serena Merrill, who serves as a staff officer for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, takes a photo with Iraqi children during a visit to the market place in Yusufiyah, Iraq Nov. 14.

Staying safe is key while staying in touch

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq - Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division have only been on Camp Prosperity for about a week, and already, Soldiers are using every resource available to make contact home.

Leaders from the Black Jack Brigade

uphold the importance of calling home, writing letters and e-mails and using the Internet to update blogs, but there are quiet reminders everywhere you go on the camp to uphold operational security (OPSEC). Whether it's posters in the call center or friendly reminders from leaders, OPSEC is a priority for the brigade.

"To me, OPSEC is keeping information that keeps me and everyone around me safe," said 2nd Lt. Martin Ellison, an intel-

ligence trainer with the 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment's Military Training Team.

Ellison makes contact with his family back in Fresno, Calif., as often as he can. He said that while he likes to keep in touch, he always reminds himself not to talk about certain things. He said it's not hard to

Use OPSEC when talking to family

OPSEC

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remember, as it is important.

In fact, it's so important, the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Peter J. Shoomaker, has made it one of his top priorities, said Maj. J.P. Smith, the 2nd BCT information operations officer-in-charge.

Smith added that OPSEC isn't meant to impede 1st Amendment rights, but is instead used to keep a check on what information the enemy can possibly use against troops.

"There have been instances of the enemy using photos from a Soldier's blog in propaganda," Smith said. "You do have freedom of speech, but you have to realize there are

consequences if you do the wrong thing. I don't think anyone wants to get themselves or fellow Soldiers hurt because of something they did to break OPSEC."

Talking about troop movements, time-lines, upcoming missions and casualties are some of the things considered off-limits while on the web or phone. Sometimes, however, you don't have to say anything to break OPSEC rules.

Logging off your computer and making sure you secure any type of removable memory storage device such as thumb drives, flashcards or memory sticks, can help reduce the chance that information can fall into the wrong hands. With many computers now using the common access card (CAC) to

log on and off computers, Soldiers should remember where their ID card is at all times.

"The Army is enough of a brotherhood to make it an

incentive to help keep everyone safe," Ellison said. "If you want people to follow OPSEC, emphasize the importance of doing your part to keep each other safe," Ellison said.



(Photo illustration by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT Public Affairs)

Soldiers should always be mindful of operational security rules when communicating with their loved ones.

Arabic Phrase of the Day

ismi...

Defined: My name is...

Iraq 3-Day Forecast



Today

**High: 65
Low: 41**



Tomorrow

**High: 66
Low: 41**



Thursday

**High: 69
Low: 44**

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Cav families get morale boost at Fall Fest

By Amanda Kim Stairrett
Killeen Daily Herald

FORT HOOD, Texas - Nothing takes kids' minds off their parents' deployment like chucking a pumpkin 50 feet.

A homemade pumpkin catapult was just one of the features at Saturday's 1st Cavalry Division Fall Festival - an event to help keep spirits high during the first part of the deployment - which drew more than 1,500 of the First Team's family members.

It takes a while for families to hit their "deployment stride," the time when they get into a routine after their Soldiers deploy, said Chrystal Garcia. The division began deploying Soldiers in August, the last of them left in early October.

Garcia is the Family Readiness Group adviser of the 1st Cavalry Division's Special Troops Battalion and wife of its commander, Lt. Col. Daniel Garcia. The battalion sponsored the festival Saturday afternoon in the field next to the Horse Cavalry Detachment's stables.

The event was more than a success, Garcia said, and there were many happy children.

Besides the pumpkin contraption, the Fall Festival included free food,

carnival-like games, a rock-climbing wall, petting zoo, hay rides, pumpkin-seed spitting contest, tours through the Horse Detachment's stables and a demonstration by the unit to families of First Team Soldiers.

The event was created to build the morale of families and take their minds off what is going on in the Middle East, Garcia said. It was also important that the families know the division isn't just concentrating on the Soldiers - leaders also are thinking about the families, said Elizabeth Cotton, a Family Readiness Group leader and wife of Lt. Col. Sylvester Cotton, a signal officer for the division.

It takes a while to get settled into a new schedule and form a supportive circle of friends, Garcia said, and the division wanted to do something before families entered their "deployment stride." The Fall Festival helps to get families "out and about," said Col. Larry Phelps, the First Team rear detachment commander, who attended the event with one of his sons.

The event ended with the Horse Detachment's riding and tactics demonstration "in typical Cav fashion," Phelps said. He was pleased so many from the community attended the festival, and he saw everyone from age 1 month to 87 years old.



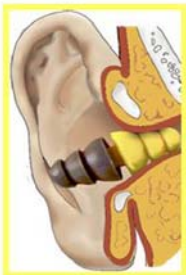
(Photo by David Norris, Killeen Daily Herald)

Spc. Elizabeth Loftin runs with Victoria Wieman as they compete in the three-legged race Nov. 4 during the 1st Cav. Div. Fall Fest. The festival was the first division wide event for families since most of the Soldiers finished deploying Nov. 1.



COMBAT EARPLUGS

HOW TO USE THEM



➤ Insert **YELLOW** plugs when you expect loud impulse noise such as weapons fire, explosions, etc. Remember, green out for tactical situations.

➤ Insert **OLIVE DRAB** plugs for steady state noise in and around aircraft, noisy vehicles, etc. In this manner it works like standard earplugs.



"The single most important thing a Soldier can do is perform all tasks to standard and wear all the protective equipment they were issued,"

**- Dale Smith
1st Cav. Safety
Director**

Soldier's Find Comfort in "Lucky Charms"

By Pfc. Shea Butler
7th MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Before heading into Baghdad, Soldiers here put on layer after layer of protective gear. There's the Army Combat Uniform first, then an Outer Tactical Vest and, finally, they top it off with an Army Combat Helmet.

All of that is great for physical safety, but sometimes it takes digging a little deeper under the uniform to see what really makes Soldiers feel at ease.

It's in the depths of their pockets where you find a Soldier's "lucky charm," the item that makes them smile, reminds them of home and never leaves their side.

"Twinkie the Kid" is a trinket for children to carry their Twinkies to school for lunch. That was until Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow, the 1st Cavalry Division's senior non-commissioned officer, got one.

Now, it's his lucky charm.

"My wife sent me Twinkie the Kid during Operation Iraqi Freedom I as a joke, and it hasn't left my side since," the Townsend, Mont., native said.

Twinkie the Kid has developed many Cav-like characteristics since spending so much time with him. He even got a new name - "Cav Kid."

The Cav Kid blends in with the rest of his Cav battle buddies. His apparel includes a Stetson and cowboy boots.

"The Stetson isn't authorized in theater ... yet, but we let it slide for the Cav Kid," Johndrow said.

After three deployments and many missions all over Iraq the Cav Kid has definitely earned his spurs, Johndrow said. He has battle scrapes to

prove it and he even has his own place in Johndrow's humvee. The Cav Kid doesn't leave the wire without protection, though. He has a small plastic gun that he carries for effect.

"He (the Cav Kid) is more than just a lucky charm. He is my wingman," said Johndrow.

The toy also serves as a sentimental reminder to Johndrow of his wife, Vickie, back home. He said makes him smile when he looks at it. It also helps keep him connected back home.

"I send my wife pictures of The Cav Kid and I, and it makes her smile," he said. Johndrow said his wife even went and purchased a "Ms. Cav the Kid." She sends pictures of the adventures they go on together. Having a little token of home helps the division's top NCO get through each day.

"No matter how bad your day is you can look at The Cav Kid, and he's always smiling," Johndrow said. "You can't help but smile, too."

The First Team's command sergeant major isn't alone when it comes to carrying tokens from home. For Staff Sgt. Brian Grinshaw, it's a golden wedding ring that fits tightly around his right ring finger that brings him comfort.

"My dad gave it to me when I was 21. I promised to never take it off and I haven't," said Grinshaw, an Oklahoma City native with headquarters company, 1st Cav. Div. "It was my dad's wedding ring from when he was married to my mom."

The ring has traveled with Grinshaw to Kosovo and now to Iraq for a second time.

"I plan on passing this ring on to my son to keep the tradition alive," he said.

For Capt. Elizabeth



(Photo by Shea Butler, 7th MPAD)

Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow, the senior noncommissioned officer for the Multi-National Division - Baghdad and 1st Cavalry Division, shows off his lucky charm, the "Cav Kid" outside the division headquarters Nov. 15.

Witowski, a Pittsburgh native also from the headquarters company, a Saint Christopher medal that once belonged to her great grandmother is her good luck charm. She keeps it tucked away in an ear plug case connected to her protective vest.

She said her father gave it to her for luck on her first deployment and she has kept it with her ever since.

"It seems once something gets you through one deployment you have to bring it on the next," she said.

If you look deep in the pockets of Lt. Col. Eric Winkie,

HHC, 1st Cav. Div., you will find a crucifix blessed by a chaplain during Desert Storm.

"All of my kids have touched it and I don't leave home without it," he said.

The crucifix has traveled with him through Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Kuwait and now back to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Whether it be religious, sentimental or superstitious, many troops carry some sort of "lucky charm" that helps get them through the day, or brings back memories of a home thousands of miles away.